



From left, Bernadette Coyer, Laurie Richardson, Stacy Warren and Brian Fernandez, all from Hampton Inn of Chicopee, pose for a photo during the recent competition at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute. *Submitted photo*

## Manager teams battle in kitchen

Eighteen employees from four hotels competed last month in a friendly “Chopped”-style culinary competition at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute designed to enhance their professional development.

The participants, all management-level employees from the BK Investment Hotel Group, took part in a new one-day, four-hour program, “Team Building Through Culinary.” The program is offered by Training and Workforce Options, also known as TWO, a collaboration between Springfield Technical Community College and Holyoke Community College.

The cooking competition, modeled on the Food Network show “Chopped,” was led by chef and HCC culinary arts instructor Tracy Carter, whose professional experience includes working at the Food Network, where she prepared the ingredient baskets for the show.

“The cooking sessions at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute are designed to help employees who work closely together improve their communication, collaboration and problem-solving skills, while enhancing team cohesiveness and highlighting individual talents,” said Tracy Whitfield, TWO’s director of business development. “TWO’s mission is to provide area companies customizable training programs for their employees’ professional growth.”

The Oct. 17 program included man-

agement teams from four of the BK hotel group’s properties — Hampton Inn by Hilton in Chicopee, Residence Inn by Marriott in Chicopee, Tru by Hilton in Chicopee, and Holiday Inn Express in Brattleboro, Vt. — who learned cooking techniques while competing against each other in one of the HCC facility’s teaching kitchens.

Under the direction of Chef Carter, each of the four teams worked together to create a meal using a basket of pre-selected, mandatory ingredients, which in this case included chicken (for the protein), brussel sprouts (vegetable), mozzarella cheese (starch) and guava paste (wild card), along with other items they could find in the kitchen’s pantries and refrigerators.

After the cooking was done, the participants sat down together to dine, sample each other’s creations and vote for the team whose food they liked best. Two teams tied for the win: Hampton Inn and the self-proclaimed “Team Awesome” from Tru.

“We had a lot of fun,” said Sandra Reed Hofstetter, BK’s regional director of operations. “Many thanks to Chef Tracy and the TWO team for the warm welcome and attention to detail.”

For more about “Team Building Through Culinary” and other TWO training programs, contact Tracy Whitfield at 413-221-4443 or [twhitfield@twoworks.org](mailto:twhitfield@twoworks.org).